

Rogue Librarians, Episode 4
The Hate U Give: Part 2 (Close Reading)

Welcome to the fourth episode of Rogue Librarians, a podcast in which three librarians discuss banned books. We are your hosts, Marian, Dorothy, Alanna, and we are the Rogue Librarians. We would love for you to participate in our discussion. Please visit www.theroquelibrarians.com if you would like to leave a comment or question.

Um and we're going to start off with a book that we've recently read and I'm gonna pass on this one to Alanna. Do you want to start us off? Sure. Well this time it's not exactly a book. I saw a play recently called *Pass Over* By Antoinette Nwandu. And it was so relevant for our discussion of *The Hate U Give*. It's about two young black men um who are just minding their own business and um violence happens to them because of their race and it involves police violence too. So it is it was so incredibly moving and so sad and so difficult to watch, but also beautiful and sometimes funny. And um the language used in that play was much more intense than the language used in this book. So it brought me back to our discussion of the language but I highly recommend if you can see that play at some point to see it. And how about you Dorothy?

I have a book that is going to very much inform today's discussion. I've been reading *How Story Works* by Lani Diane Rich, subtitled, *An Elegant Guide to the Craft of Storytelling*. Also she has a podcast of the same name. So I've sort of been experiencing it both through reading and listening. And it's just so exciting to me as someone who likes to think of themselves as a writer who you know teaches writing and now you know close discussion of literature to really begin to put together how what what is narrative theory and how it works so highly recommended.

Alrighty. And then um the book, a book that I've read recently is um a book called *The Madness of Crowds* and this is by one of my favorite authors Louise Penny, a Canadian author. Um And this particular book, in a sense also is a proposed to our disk because it deals with um what do you do when you have a professor coming to speak at a college who is talking about a topic which is very very controversial and is going to cause a lot of um rioting and anger in your community and your police detective, police officer trying to protect um protect people. But also you have very strong feelings and emotions connected to the topic at hand which in this case is eugenics, wow sounds intense but very satisfying and if you never read Louise Penny, her characters are delightful and quirky and her fictional town is where I want to retire to.

Yes, it does sound lovely. Well thank you Marian. Today we will continue discussing *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas, which, as we said last time, was the fifth most frequently challenged book in America in 2021. We went into a lot of detail last time about why it's been banned, but for a quick reminder, it's been banned because of the profanity, promoting an anti-police message, and indoctrination of a social agenda, violence, drug use, and sexual references. And we went into quite a bit of detail last time about some of the issues with banning it for these particular reasons and a quick reminder of a trigger warning. We will be discussing the murder of a teenager by the police, as well as other serious issues mentioned in the book. And as we discussed last time, we have a quick caveat for our discussions of racism. We are three white women, so we have not experienced many of these things ourselves, even though we empathize with the characters and we acknowledge our privilege as white people, so if we do make mistakes, please know that we intend no harm and we're going to now remind you what this book is about. So I'll turn it over to Dorothy.

All right, so quick summary of this is the story of Starr who lives in a sketchy black neighborhood where there's gang activity. Her father was a um was in pretty high up in the gangs, did some prison time and has now gotten out, parents have put her in a white her and her siblings in a white, predominantly white school uh to make sure that they get a decent education and are not around all of the drug culture as much. Uh, and so early in the book, um, stars in the car with her friend Khalil and they're pulled over by the police and Khalil is shot and killed and the story is very much about the aftermath of that and how it affects her life and her understanding of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Excellent, Alright, so I wanted to start off our discussion since I've been reading this fantastic book about how story works and um so of course, you know, any time you talked about the story, you're trying to figure out what's, you know, what is the conflict and according to how story works, the conflict, the main driving conflict, first of all, there's many, many, many conflicts within the book, but the one that is driving the story um should have to mutually exclusive things at stake. So when I'm thinking through what, what is the conflict, it was interesting to me because when you see the title and you think about Black Lives Matter, you automatically kind of go to blacks versus whites, right, cops are bad, right? That is not remotely what the conflict of this book is. And then you look internally is it's Starr, you know, versus Starr in terms of coming to understand herself. What I really came down to was that there's a lot of different ways to look at

it, but I think that the real conflict is Starr wanting to speak out versus Starr wanting to be safe and keep her family safe because those two things are mutually exclusive. She cannot simply live her life and speak out for Khalil, who she loved and to try to make a difference in the world. If she does that, if she makes that decision, then things will change, she will be in more danger, her family will be in more danger and that, you know, I noticed all the way throughout the book being what, what's driving the decisions that star is making? Because she starts off, I don't want to tell anybody that it was me and then she doesn't tell her friends that it was her and that causes some conflict there, that her friends maybe might have been a little bit more sympathetic had they understood that, and she didn't tell her boyfriend and she didn't tell her boyfriend right away. Um and then it becomes more clear through the middle of the book, when her father is made to lay on the ground. Not only does she see, she said yeah, by a police officer, because the police officer realized he was the father of the witness, which they had been trying to keep a secret. So first of all, she's seeing, it's real hard to keep a secret, secondly, she's seeing, but if I don't keep a secret, this is what will happen. So she's very, very much conflicted about what to do and so that I believe is her journey and what a great way to help non black readers give into the story. The conflict is not about the black versus the white conflict is simply about things are happening, how do I deal with it, you know, how can I be safe or should I speak out? And we all have situations like that, so that to me was just you know, kind of a revelation from having read this book to really applying this idea of narrative theory and figuring out exactly what the conflict is.

I completely agree with you Dorothy and we see Starr develop confidence, we see her make the decision to speak out throughout the book and that helps us get into our first segment in a little more detail, focusing on characterization. So um I think you two would agree that we do understand um the character of Starr Carter really well, she's fully developed, she's not perfect, we know some of her flaws, we know her interests, we know that she code-switches, so she changes how she speaks when she's around her white friends and then when she's around her family and black friends and she really feels caught in between those two worlds, she feels like she doesn't completely belong in either one because she can't truly be herself and I think one of the things she learns throughout the book is how to be herself and you see that in the moment when her brother Seven has a birthday party and um they, he invites friends from their family, their neighborhood and also from the school. And so for the first time they're really all mixing and she doesn't feel the need to picture who she's talking to and speak in a certain way

because of it. She's able to just be herself. And I think that's a really beautiful thing that she realizes.

And um yeah, she's just an excellent character for sure. To harken back to the book that's fresh in my mind. Um characters with what Lani Diane Rich says and how story works when you have well rounded characters. They need strengths, weaknesses and vulnerabilities and we get, you know, all of those in spades from Starr and what makes Starr vulnerable is really caring about her family and their safety and you know, trying to, there's that line between which Starr she is having any given time and whether or not she can say a certain thing and that, you know, definitely leaves her vulnerable not to mention the vulnerability of being hurt for speaking out. So yeah, fantastic.

But I also think that it really brings up the question of language um and how important language is in terms of representing who we are and how important language is in our assumptions that we make of other people. Um you know, having grown up in a Southern city with a Southern accent and then gone to a college in the Northeast. Um I was significantly made fun of teased about my southern accent when I arrived on the Northeast college campus and I learned to change the way that I spoke as well and different expressions that I would say that people didn't understand. Um and and so to be taken seriously or to be taken um as an intelligent person, you know, in different, in different areas, I think um we all play that game a little bit, I mean certainly were not required to the amount that star was or is in the story and um people that she represents, but but there is there is some language issue that goes on. Um and then I think about my daughter who has lived abroad in a foreign country and had to learn, you know, that country's language French um France and and her French and she's trying to be able to fit in as part of the French culture, but she's American. And so even though to my ear, her French sounds really fantastic and her accent sounds really fantastic. She's been there several years now to the french ear, she still has a very american accent and how she's treated as a result of that accent. So, so language is a very interesting um part of who a character is for sure.

Yeah, and I think we mentioned last time how realistic the dialogue sounds here and I noticed that much more listening to the book this time rather than just looking at it as I did last time. And uh I think you you hear those differences in language much more when the narrator is reading it for you and especially because I did not grow up using some of the language that Starr uses

and other people around her use, it's it feels much more authentic to hear someone speak that way.

I wanted to point out that, you know, Starr is not the only fully realized character, a lot of...which other characters do you guys find that you really enjoyed reading? Well, I loved her whole family. I think you get to know her parents Maverick and Lisa really well, you get to know her brother Seven quite well and her younger brother Sekani, I think his name is, quite well, and her Uncle Carlos, um I don't think you get to know her Aunt Pam quite as well. She doesn't have as big a role here. But um you get, you see the nuances of the characters, you see their positive sides, you see their flaws and what it struck me the most was just the fierce love they have for each other and um like no matter what happens to them, they really do try to stick together and support each other and when a conflict does come up between them, it's usually because they love each other so much that they're hurt by situation, or it brings up the past, like with the fact that seven's mother was not Lisa, Maverick got her pregnant when he and Lisa had broken up briefly when they were teenagers. So, um their family life is complicated. It's often seems messy, but it's incredibly loving and loyal, incredibly loyal.

I think you see that in Carlos, especially because Carlos and Starr's relationship is so sweet and, and it really points out, you know, one of the problems of jailing black people, you know, they can't be there for their families and so Carlos was a father figure for her for a few years while Maverick was in prison, which definitely had some tension, it does between Maverick and Carlos and um though it's clear to us being in Starr's point of view that she genuinely loves and reveres her father as well as her uncle Carlos even she goes back in and you know, self reflect on the fact that at one point, she asked if she could call uncle Carlos her daddy because her daddy, she couldn't see him. He was in um, he was in prison. Yes, when she was a baby, refused to let her come visit because she didn't, he didn't want her to have that image of him behind bars. And I think you also see in Carlos, um, this tension between his loyalty and love for his family, especially Starr, and the fact that he's a police officer and he's the one at the beginning who tries to tell her you need to talk to the police. Most police officers are good people, they're just trying to help you. But later on you see him um, put on leave because he punches the police officer once he finds out that the police officer had put his gun like towards Starr. Yeah, pointed out right after Khalil died. And I think his love for his almost daughter overwhelms his loyalty to the police there. And you see him really shift throughout the book in terms of where his loyalty lies and you know, I ran into that interaction a little bit also because

we don't get a lot of character development for 115, for the cop that shot Khalil, but it kind of spoke to me of like that that shift in his loyalties spoke to me of the fact that, when we first see 115 after the shooting, he's sitting by the police car and looking really quite stunned by what has happened. Like this has affected him. Um, and then as you get more time and distance and as people kind of feed him this line that the kid was a drug dealer, it's not your fault that he kind of gets a little bit more like righteous about his part. And I don't know that's just my reading.

I don't know, but I just, it did make me reflect that and I recently heard I listened to about a podcast recently listened to I think it was no, I'm not gonna remember, there was a black economist who was talking about these issues and he rode along with cops in order to try and understand what was happening and what they said to him over and over was when you discharge your weapon, it's a life changing event. So like what happens between that and this code that the cops have this loyalty that they have with each other, where it's almost like the cop knows this is deeply moving, a life-changing event, but everyone tries to kind of make it okay, right. And one of the ways that they do that is by dehumanizing the victim, which is what immediately happened to Khalil with the whole oh well he was probably a drug dealer and which takes me to um in the last episode um what it was mentioned as the potential con of this story um that perhaps some of the characters weren't fully developed.

Specifically I want to talk about Starr's friend Hailey um because I'm kind of reading into my interpretation of Hailey, but I think that Hailey is intentionally not fully fleshed out. Um and so Hailey, for those of you who haven't completely who haven't read the book yet um is a friend of Starr's at Williamson, the white school, the white private school and Hailey is white and Hailey and Starr bond very closely early on in their relationship because Hailey is, has just lost her mother and Starr is coming into the school having just lost her best friend Natasha, who we mentioned in the last episode was killed in a drive by shooting when she was 10 years old, um and obviously that that caused a lot of trauma and grief um and sharing trauma and grief, Hailey and Starr bonded very, very deeply, but as um as the hate you get, as this story is evolving as we've, you know, um Starr's coming back to school after Khalil's death um and Hailey and and you know, none of the kids at school know what's happened because we've talked about how Starr's trying to, you know, have to keep that under wraps. But Hailey um Starr comments that she and Hailey have grown apart and she comments that what the only thing that she can pinpoint as to why they've grown apart is that Starr had posted on her instagram, the Emmett Till reference, and it's specifically the picture she posted was the picture of the destroyed face of

Emmett Till um and Haley reacted very strongly to that. Like why would you put something like that on, you know, that just very much was disturbing and then Starr found out that Haley had stopped following her on her on her instagram as a result of that, which, you know in the world, social media in teenager world is like a huge, it's huge, it's it's a it's a blow, it's a hey, you're not my friend anymore. And so Hailey is becoming, you know, very sensitive to Starr's maybe blackness or awareness of um political issues that maybe Hailey's not comfortable with and we don't know really much about Hailey's background other than that they're wealthy. Um we know that her mother has died. Um and and I really feel that that's kind of an intentional thing and there is some compassion that we do see from Hailey, though, because Hailey, you know, right after Khalil's murder, Haley, you know, she's like, what's up with you Star? You know, you're so sensitive, you know, is it the anniversary of your friend's death? You know, it was just the anniversary of my mom's death. I understand, I understand, so she's trying to find some compassion, but she doesn't know she's not dealing with a full deck and at the same time she's uncomfortable with um the fact that she's made this comment about chicken fried chicken which they had had for lunch that day.

I could totally see myself making such a mistake in the response when she calls when Starr calls it out is that you have to, she doesn't apologize, she doesn't apologize to understand you're reading into it. I didn't right and who of us has not done that when someone has pointed out, hey, you misspoke or you said something you shouldn't have said or you've offended me. Well I didn't really mean it that way. We all defend ourselves rather than saying, you know, you caught me because we don't want to self indict. And so that just pushes me fast forward to why I think Hailey is not developed fully is I kind of feel like Hailey is supposed to be us the reader, that you can't, if you don't over develop a character then you leave it to our own interpretation of who she is and what her background is. And she could be any of us who can say, you know, I've I've got friends who are black, so I totally understand and oh yeah, that was an [] moment because she made the fried chicken comment that really you know Star was extremely sensitive to and maybe a little overly sensitive because of the recent incidents, but but she kind of stepped on her and then didn't take ownership of the fact that oh yeah, I guess from your perspective that would be considered, you know, a snide comment and I'm sorry. She immediately says like something like are you trying to say I'm racist? And Starr says no I'm trying to say you said something racist doesn't mean that you are a racist person, but Hailey can't see the difference. And I think that's something that comes up in society frequently is that

people say, well I'm not racist and it's like but you said something racist. Like even if you don't realize it, it's racist, right?

I mean we discussed in the last episode, you know the difference between Black Lives Matter and All Lives Matter and I remember having that conversation with the person who was adamant about all lives matter who swore up and down, I am not a racist and I don't think there are a whole lot of people in the world who are gonna say, hey I'm a racist, you know that people don't want to do that because we want to consider ourselves to be good people and being a racist is a bad thing, but everybody's a little bit racist, just like everybody is a little bit sexist, including a lot of women, it's for sure the culture, but when you realize that you've made a mistake, you need to own it and do better in the future.

Which is why I love the conversation between Hailey and Starr and Maya. And so I think Maya is there to be this like to show how to have that conversation a little bit because when um just recap they she was very upset because they did a protest at school and they just did it to protest for Khalil but they did it like hey we can get out of class if we protest this and so Starr was very angry because it was trivializing Khalil's life and when they had the conversation about it, Maya was like you want an apology. Okay great. You know you're right. That was a stupid reason to have a protest. I apologize. That was thoughtless of us. Hailey just will not do it. Exactly she is digging in and so it just kind of shows to an opposition.

Yeah, I think that's a really interesting way of looking at Hailey and I think you're right, Marian, and I think it does allow us white readers especially you know, it depends on who who is reading this, but it could allow white readers to read themselves into the book a little bit more. You know another character who I thought wasn't fleshed out quite as much in this book was King because he really is portrayed as the villain here. Um he is the gang leader for the King Lords, he is the big, this drug dealer and he intimidates people, he silences people, he beats up his wife, beats up his kids. He shows up at Khalil's funeral putting a handkerchief or yeah, something like that on the coffin, which is what they do for gang members. But it turns out he just did that to save face because Khalil refused to join the gang. And so King was really portrayed in a completely negative light I would say in this book but now that I've read *Concrete Rose*, the prequel that she wrote afterwards. Um King has a lot more nuance to him in that book. You find out that his parents died when he was young. He lived in foster care. He lived with many different families and he feels like being a drug dealer is the only way to make a living

and to look out for himself. And he also is presented in a more caring light, I would say sometimes. And he also um you find out that he dropped out of high school, was expelled from high school, for beating up his football coach after his football coach um said something very, very racist and you understand that football was really important to him and then maybe if he had stayed in school and maybe if he had graduated his life would have turned out very differently. But because he reacted in that way he was expelled. And so I think you get to know King in a very different way, which I found fascinating, but in this book he seems very one-sided. DeVante gives us a little bit of some of that nuance because he has, he's at that crossroads where he's made the decision. He does not want to try to avenge his brother's death and continue that cycle, but we don't get it for King at all.

Maybe that takes us onto our next segment for a closer discussion of themes and we've already touched on this first theme a little bit, especially when Dorothy was talking about the main conflict in the story. But I definitely thought when I was reading the book this time, that the most important theme is you need to use your voice to stand up for what is right and to seek justice. And Starr struggles with this early in the novel, but eventually realizes that that is the only way that she can make things better for Khalil's family, for the community. And um one part where this shows up is Ms. Ofrah, who's her lawyer and also an activist, um says to Starr near the end of the book, "Remember what I told you about your voice?" and Starr says, "You said it's my biggest weapon," and in that moment Starr takes the bullhorn and gets the crowd that's already protesting after Khalil's um murderer has been acquitted or they're not going to bring charges against him. Um she speaks to the people there and she says, you know, really in the strongest way possible that the way the police currently functions is wrong and the way they see black people is wrong, and she's trying to get the crowd stirred up and and to get justice for Khalil and I think you see that theme come to a head in that moment.

Well, and it really even just starts off voice is explored in a lot of different ways with the code-switching with her thinking and we're at a party and she has to think about not sounding too white or not bringing up her white friends. Uh and then later we see her at school, you know, talking in a different way. So that is one, you know another thing about voice when they when she first tells her story, she does it kind of disguised. Yes, so there's there's that as well, yep, yep. Well and I was thinking even the first time she speaks to the police officers, the two detectives um and she's trying really hard to use her um white voice. You know, the yes mam's and the but then her, you know the emotions take over and you know sometimes she drops

things, things just pop out of her mouth that are her authentic self, her authentic voice and in her head she's like damn, I shouldn't have said that, but but that's the power is the authenticity of our voices.

Yeah. And that goes with um I think a connected theme that you need to be who you truly are, that when you are code switching, when you are constantly thinking about who am I with, how should I act in this situation. Um it really complicates things and doesn't allow you to be authentic and only when she realizes this. Can she? I think truly um speak up for Khalil and for everyone else.

Yeah, I just was thinking about the last book that we discussed gender queer and how important language and labels and pronouns are and how you know that even kind of I mean it's it's it pops in here just how important language and voice and being your authentic self really is in every single situation. I mean, I think that runs through feminism, racism. LGBTQ. Yeah, Yeah, right. I mean if we're saying use your voice to stand up for what is right and seek justice, your voice is your biggest weapon, be who you truly are, and that's exactly what Angie Thomas is doing. For sure, for sure. I just that just that is the beauty of humanity be who you are. I mean if you believe in a creator in of any, you know, a god of any variety, each of us is created in perfection and we we have to be loyal to what that perfection is. And um so that just that just popped into my head as to how strong that theme is.

I also thought there were a couple of themes that dealt more with friendship and family, um and maybe I'll start with family, because that seems to be more important here. But um Lisa, her, Starr's mother, mentions that it's important to give people second chances if they can prove that they've really changed. So you find out some about Lisa and Maverick's past and um the fact that Lisa eventually forgives Maverick for essentially cheating on her, having a child with another woman when they were briefly broken up, and I think that is a model for Starr in the book is like, she does try to give people second chances sometimes and if she feels like they truly deserve them and um it seems like family always comes first here and that's something that Maverick struggles with for a while because he still wants the family to live in Garden Heights, but as things get more and more violent and their family is threatened, Starr in particular, um Lisa feels very strongly that they can't live there anymore. So Maverick feels torn between the community, his family, but he clearly makes the decision. Family comes first and I'll do what I can for the community, but these people around me are the most important people and there are a lot of

different ways that friendship is explored through this because we've got Khalil who she's kind of hasn't seen in a long time, her um Seven, sister Kenya, who clearly has a familial relationship but it's not a cousin, but they, they talk because they have Seven, so that's the person she's been the most in touch with. We've got the white friends, Hailey and Maya, we've got Chris and her, you know, so many different friendships that play out each in subtly different ways and then remembering back to the three of them as the Harry Potter-watching trio.

Yeah, and as we said before with Hailey, um I think Starr eventually realizes that you can let go of friendships when they're no longer serving you, and her mother, I think especially pushes her in that direction. Like, yes, you bonded when you were younger, you have many great memories, but if she's not being a good friend to you anymore, you do not need to be friends with her anymore. And I think that that's a great life lesson for everyone.

We have all experienced that for sure. For sure. One theme that I noticed and maybe you guys can help me see if it's truly a theme, if we can trace it throughout or not, but when they're in the car, on page 26, chapter two, so they're in the car and the cop has pulled them over. Um She says I can't breathe and obviously post, the term I can't breathe has taken on a whole meaning with Black Lives Matter, but I feel like there's this idea of not being able to breathe throughout this book and when we were setting up for the episode and Marian and you were discussing one segment that I will pass this to you and maybe we can see if there's any others where the story about when Starr was born starts with, you know, you weren't breathing when you were born. And so I really think that there's just so interesting to me that this theme of not being able to breathe as a state of black being in the world is kind of a very subtle, it's not a mean big thing, but I think it's I think that's really interesting.

So we're onto the final segment, which is called significance and um and I'm going to talk about a passage that spoke to me in particular, and it's on page 153 of the copy, hard copy book that I personally have, and um, this particular to set the scene, um Starr and Seven have gone, have left their house in Garden Heights, and they've gone to a playground to play basketball. They just, they just need to get out of the house and, you know, there's an incident there with some gang issues and um their parents, Lisa and Maverick, come home and the kids are gone and or they've they've been at home and the kids are gone and they get up and they come searching for them and you know, they get them into the car, it's very um, nerve wracking. And so just after that scene, um Starr's in the car with Lisa and her mom and you know, they're just they're

talking about it and you know, she says, we didn't do anything wrong and her mom is quiet for a bit and then she says, just out of nowhere, you weren't breathing when you were born and start just what for real. Um and then Lisa goes into the story of Starr's birth, that Starr was 18 when Lisa was 18 when Star was born and she said when she found out that she was pregnant, she you know, she completely changed everything. She stopped drinking, she started eating really healthy and doing everything right, everything right, everything right, Everything right, Everything right. And then she goes into deliver Starr, and Starr comes out and is not crying, is not breathing. And she talks about how it was just the longest minute of her life waiting for her baby to make the first sound when she started to cry. It was you know this catharsis and that tore me up as a mom because it just brought so many issues into this story to life about like just what you were saying um Dorothy about the breathing and what does breathing mean to lie before Starr starts to breathe. The nurse nurse says to Lisa um because Lisa says I did everything right and and Lisa said, the nurse lisa says to Starr, you can do everything right and things can still go wrong, and this is this is what it is to be human, is that every you can do everything right, but in the end, we're not in control of what's going to happen to us. Things can still go wrong and how that just leaves us feeling um the fragility of everything. Um So I'm gonna pass that back to you.

Yeah, no, that's such a powerful thought statement words to live by Starr is so angry when earlier when Khalil has has died. And um she and Seven come home from school and they pick up food and they take it to the hospital where Lisa's working. And it's the first time that Bren, who's Khalil's biological mother, shows up in the story and Bren asks for Lisa and Lisa goes out to talk to Brent and she's so full of compassion and she just says, you know, I know how hard this is, and you know, she's giving Starr to give her food and whatnot. And Star gets really angry and she says, you know, she doesn't have a right to cry. How can she be so sad? She wasn't a part of his life and she did everything wrong. And it shows that incredible bond that mothers have with their children and all of us might not be mothers or parents, but all of us are children of some mother and and to understand that that pain of childbirth and the pain that anything could possibly happen at any point to your child is an extremely strong and and and pervasive, very strong theme.

Yeah, that's beautifully put, Marian. I think I'll take us to our second way of getting into the text to talk about the significance a little bit more. And that is to ask a question. And one question that I had while reading the book was I was struck this time that Khalil, as Marian mentioned earlier,

um dies so early in the novel. it's the novel is just getting going, you don't even know the characters yet and he's killed by the police officer. And my question was why do you think Angie Thomas placed his death so early in the novel? Um and my thought was by not knowing much about Starr, Khalil, Kenya, their family. Um we just get to know a little bit of them and then this event happens that not only changes their lives but also illuminates who they really are as we get to know them throughout the book. So I think it is um perhaps the most important event in the book because it changes so many people, especially Starr.

I think it's the initiating event. In fact, if if to bring it back to the beginning of the discussion, if the conflict is Starr against Starr, tell the story or keep safe, that's the event. That puts her in a position to make that decision. So it has to come early in the book. Everything before the initiating event is not really the story, right? Yeah, but the exposition seems a little shorter than some other books, right? It does, but I think, well, I think exposition should be sort of continue. You don't take us through the story, you don't want to do exposition first and then start the story like it gets.

And I think it it fits with the momentum of the book to start so strong, so so soon. Um the book is hard to put down. You just want to find out what happens as you keep reading. But I also feel like it's really because, I mean that's what the book is about, but it's not what the book is about, you know, as we as you just said, but I think it's also kind of what um my daughter's friend said to me when I asked her about reading the book and she said this is a part of our day to day lives. So to put it there at the start of the story might be shocking to us as white readers. But if you're a person who lives in a, you know, a person of color who lives in a suburb like Garden Heights, um, where drive by shootings happen all the time and deaths happen all the time and drug deals happen all the time and, and cops, uh, and have brutality against blacks happen all the time. This is just another day in the life and that's really brought home even before that happens. Because she's asking herself, why am I at this party? I, you know, some party down every single year shooting happens and they all, you know, run off and it's very much in the fabric of their lives.

Yeah, I agree with that. And I think you really understand that everyone in her neighborhood affected by someone's death, someone who is close to them, whether it's a father, a brother, a sister, a cousin, a friend, everyone knows someone who was killed usually. Um, and that leads to more trauma that leads to people trying to avenge each other's deaths. That leads to more

conflict. But you also have the sense that they understand what Starr might be feeling because they've experienced that themselves, they've, they've lost people close to them too.

Yeah. And you know, I mean, this just really hits home for me like this just popped into my head. But I, I worked for a school district, um, where my placement, one of the schools I was placed in was an elementary school that was in a neighborhood similar to Garden Heights and I was in the school for less than three years as the school librarian. And since that time I left school in 2018, since I left that school, three individuals that I knew well from teaching in a school that was kindergarten through grade five have been killed in shootings in their neighborhoods three. And if you don't teach in a school like that, you don't know what that reality is. And those, um, you know, people who teach in different districts may go their whole career and not lose a student or not know of a student that dies as a student or, or they die, but in other, you know, not to be a little any death because that's not at all my point. Um, but, but you know, they die of different causes. different situations. This is too common. These shootings that happen in neighborhoods like Garden Heights or it's too common. It happens too, too, too much and it touches every life that touches them.

Yeah, that's a really good point. Well, Dorothy, do you want to take us to our last way of getting into the significance? I do. And that last way is to think about a show, a song, or something that you think that main character might benefit from listening to or reading. And there is a book I had in mind and this is unusual, but I have not actually read this book. I only recently saw it on the shelf was by Brendan Kiely, who is one of the authors of *All American Boys*. So definitely has, you know, written about this particular subject is called *The Other Talk*.

Did he write it with Jason Reynolds? Um, I believe Jason, I haven't, again, I have not read it, but I believe Jason Reynolds has at least something to do with the book. Um, but his name was the first, you know, the big big one. So it was like with, so I don't think that Jason Reynolds was quite co-author. But um, you know, he explores what kind of talk white parents should be having with their kids and I think knowing, I think Starr would benefit from knowing that there are white people out there trying to grapple with their part in all of this and how we can talk to our children and again I haven't read the book myself but I definitely put it high on my to read mix.

That sounds really interesting, and I think you see um Starr's boyfriend, Chris, who's white, trying to understand what she's feeling and they have a big argument because she doesn't trust

him enough to tell him what happened with Khalil or that she was there. Um and he's he's really upset by that fact and she thinks he can't understand because he's white but I don't think she tries to help him understand, and I think, by the end, Chris has a much better understanding of who she is and who her family is and what's actually happening in the neighborhood because he goes with them to these protests. And um so it seems like Chris is someone who kind of learns some of that by doing you know being there and Brendan Kiley have also had the pleasure of meeting at one of the many book festivals I like to attend um has discussed, he was wearing a T shirt that day that said not in my locker room and so I stood after and talked to him and he told me how there were these boys, you know in I think it was an Oregon somewhere that we're on, you know the sports teams at their school and this was after President Trump had made the locker room comments about grabbing women and I just thought it was so fantastic that there was a group of boys who spend a lot of time in the locker room who have that reputation who stood up and said not in my locker room. And so I already know about him that he is sympathetic to causes that as a privileged white male. You know maybe don't affect him personally interesting. That sounds great. And then also to be the author of *All American Boys* which is another access which you know very much explored the differences and um you know in from different sides.

Yes. Well as you can tell, we highly recommend this book. If you have not already read it, do read it. Do listen to it because it is so well narrated and if you have already read it and you're interested, I also highly recommend *Concrete Rose*.

Yeah. And I highly recommend, after you have read *The Hate U Give* or listen to the audiobook, then see the movie. Um, I found the movie to be very well acted and very touching and as a librarian I almost never like the movies that follow that are made from books that are based on books. Um with very, very few exceptions and this is one that I was really pleased with. I will tell you that I saw it on an airplane and I cried my eyes out and it, I knew what was happening but there's something about witnessing and seeing it. Um rather than having it in your head. So I definitely recommend that as well. Um I also want to put in a plug for *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* because um that show plays a significant role in this book. Um and when Dorothy you were talking about a tv song or show or book that the main character would like, I was like she's gonna she's gonna say *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, that's too easy. But but I think that that is worth a mention. So I'm just gonna leave that to the listeners to figure out on their own. Um that's a plug for you and then we're gonna go ahead and wrap it up here.

Um in our next episode of the Rogue Librarians, we will be discussing the graphic memoir *Maus*, which is a um it's a memoir of World War Two. Um That is in two parts, we're gonna talk about both parts. Um It was created by cartoonist Art Spiegelman. It was originally a cartoon series that was then um compiled into two different sections of a book and it is gonna be a fascinating conversation. So please join us next time for that discussion. Um and the discussion of why it was banned. And of course as always if you would like to leave us a comment or a question or a suggestion for a book that you would like us to do a close reading of. Please visit us at www.theroquelibrarians.com. And if you're enjoying the podcast, please subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, or wherever you find your podcasts. Thank you so much for reading with us. Books are meant to be read. Bye!